(a) whether the Copenhagen meet on climate change could appreciate the stand of India and its domestic commitment; and

(b) if so, which are the countries working together with India in this international meet and co-operate for future commitments?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) India's approach to Climate Change is fully anchored in the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan. The actions of the Government of India are guided by the principles of equity and the common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities as enshrined in the Convention and the policy laid down In the National Action Plan on Climate Change. Developed countries however often speak of dumping the Kyoto Protocol and that major developing countries should also take on emission reduction commitments. India has taken a position that our voluntary domestic commitments that are not supported by international finance and technology should not be subject to any international Monitoring, Reporting and Verification.

(b) India is an active participant In the G-77 & China. Besides, India along with Brazil, South Africa and China (BASIC Countries) often coordinate their position on various issues of climate change at international negotiations including at Copenhagen.

Environmental clearance to hydro power projects

3441. SHRI D. RAJA:
SHRI M.P. ACHUTHAN:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that environmental clearance has been sought for building about 168 large hydro power projects in the geologically and ecologically fragile, seismically active and culturally-sensitive Brahmaputra river basin; and

(b) if so, the details of these projects and the decision of his Ministry on giving clearance to these projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Under the provisions of Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 2006, Ministry of Environment and Forests has received two hydroelectric projects for environmental clearance which are located in Brahmaputra Basin for environmental clearance. These are Demwe Lower Hydroelectric project (1750 MW) in Lohit District, Arunachal Pradesh and Gongri Hydroelectric project (90 MW) in West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh. Both the projects have been considered by the Expert Appraisal Committee at its meeting held on 16.12.2009 and recommended for environmental clearance.

Impact of climate change

3442. SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a conference on "Forestry Solutions: Strategies for Mitigation and Adaptation of the Impact of Climate Change in Western Himalayan Mountain States" has recently been held in the country;

(b) if so the details thereof;

(c) whether a 16-point agenda has been introduced by experts in the field of forestry and environment, as its solution to combat the adverse impact of climate change, which are far more severe due to power projects, cement industry and other projects, in the fragile Himalayan ecology; and

(d) if so, the details thereof alongwith Government's views thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A National conference on "Forestry Solutions: Strategies for Mitigation and Adaptation of the Impact of Climate Change in Western Himalayan mountain states" was held at Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, from 19-21 November 2009.

(c) and (d) The Conference recommended the following agenda to guide the states of Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand in the formulation and implementation of policies and strategies for the forestry sector:-

i) There is a need to formulate a separate and distinct forest policy for western Himalayan states in view of their high vulnerability to climate change; critical role as watershed states for the northern Indian plains and unique ecosystems and forested landscapes rich in biodiversity.

ii) There is an urgent need to establish long-term monitoring plots across representative eco-zones, to gather scientific data on climatic and biological parameters, especially in Riverine, Alpine and Shivalik ecosystems.

iii) Mapping climate change driven adaptations in natural resource use and livelihood patterns across eco-zones.

iv) Development of a database on Carbon sequestration potential of forest flora in these States.

v) Periodic assessment of carbon stock including soil carbon under different ecosystems.

vi) Effective deployment of new and advanced technologies, such as GIS, remote sensing, climate modeling in natural resource management.

vii) Urgent need to incentivise community involvement in some mainstream forest department activities including forest protection, afforestation and fire fighting.

viii) Integrating and extending the concept and practice of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) within the states to compensate for foregone land-use and occupation options adversely impacting the environment.

ix) Conservation of biological diversity should guide afforestation programmes and not carbon sequestration potential alone.

x) Re-orienting afforestation programmes to focus on species that help mitigate man-animal conflict.

xi) Revisiting forestry operations to realize full water conservation potential of forests leading to development of water sanctuaries.

xii) Gender specific polices are required to help cope with the loss of control over natural resources, technologies and credit to deal with seasonal and episodic weather and natural disasters.

xiii) Impress upon Government of India to move beyond Green Bonus to adequately compensate these states for ecosystem services flows.

xiv) Re-orient developmental interventions adopting watershed as the unit for planning and fund flows.

xv) Re-design the existing tourism policy to produce alternative mountain-specific tourism models focusing on environmental sustainability.

xvi) Forest departments should be more proactive in influencing policies of other sectors such as Road Construction, Transportation, Power and Industries which impinge on conservation issues.

Guidelines and best practices for the governance for sustaining Himalayan Eco-system have been developed and shared with all State Governments in the Himalayan Region.

Logging of trees by Everest Power Private Ltd.

3443. SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that the Everest Power Private Limited (EPPL) axed 364 trees and destroyed 115 bighas of forest area in the lush green Malana valley without obtaining prior permission from his Ministry;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the company has also dumped muck and road debris along the Malana riverside, burying alive thousands of smaller species of plants and local herbs;

(d) if so, whether Government has conducted any inquiry in this regard; and

(e) if so, the action Government has taken against the company and other responsible authorities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. As reported by Forest Department, Government of Himachal Pradesh that Everest Power Private Limited (EPPL) has damaged (not axed) 365 trees, out of which 2 trees were felled illicitly during the construction of Malana-II Hydro Electric Project. The damage started with the construction of road leading to dam site in 2006 to 2007. The area damaged